



**2020**

**MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER  
PROGRAM GUIDE**

**COLUMBIA COUNTY**

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## **The Master Gardener Volunteer Program**

The rapid urban growth in many areas of the United States coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening, have prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Service Agents. Many of these questions are seasonal in nature and relatively easy to answer assuming that one has horticultural training.

In 1972, an innovative Extension Service Agent in the state of Washington reasoned that well-trained volunteers could respond to many of the everyday homeowner questions, freeing him and his colleagues for more technical and difficult problems. Volunteers, such as Extension Homemakers and 4-H Leaders, had always been a part of the Extension Service but never in the area of homeowner horticulture. So the Extension Agent decided to select, train and certify volunteers as Master Gardeners. They soon succeeded in meeting his desired objectives - in fact, they exceeded his expectations. And so it was the Master Gardener Program began.

Since that time, the Master Gardener Program has grown and is now active in more than 30 states. The Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program has been around since 1979, and each year, approximately 4,700 Master Gardeners contribute a total of 365,000 hours of service, helping to make their communities better informed, more sustainable and more beautiful. The Master Gardener Volunteer Program in Florida is sponsored by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) of which the Cooperative Extension Service is a part.

## **What is UF/IFAS Extension?**

For a more complete understanding of this unique organization, we must go back to 1862 when the U. S. Congress passed the Morrill Act, which established colleges in each state to be financed through grants of land from the federal government. They became known as "land grant colleges," a name which persists today. These colleges would emphasize teaching practical subjects, such as agriculture and home economics. The 1887 Hatch Act provided for experimental stations at land grant colleges to conduct agricultural research.

Then in 1914, the Smith-Lever Act created the Extension Service as a part of these colleges as a means of disseminating the practical knowledge gained through agricultural research. The University of Florida at Gainesville is Florida's land grant college; The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is that part of the University, which has responsibility for the Cooperative Extension Service.

The term "cooperative" refers to the method by which extension services are funded. In Florida, three cooperating tax sources provide funds: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the State through legislative appropriations and the counties through appropriations by county governments. The word "cooperative" also implies a sharing of information generated through sound research programs at the federal and state levels.

The term "extension" defines this organization's purpose - to extend the information generated at the state and federal level to people at the county level in the form of a "service." The Cooperative Extension Service is an informal educational organization, which provides information in three (3) main areas: Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development. Community Development, Marine Biology and Energy are associated programs.

The motto and goal of the Cooperative Extension Service is "Helping People Help Themselves." Thus, you can see how well the volunteer Master Gardener concept fits into the ultimate objectives and goals of the Extension Service.

## **Columbia County Master Gardener Volunteer Program**

In Columbia County, approximately 25 individuals are active in the program, having committed themselves to giving a minimum of thirty-five (35) hours of volunteer service each year in order to remain active in the program.

To broaden the volunteer program in Columbia County for this upcoming year, we need volunteers to help in specific areas and are asking Master Gardeners to sign up for certain volunteer positions and activities.

Selection to become a candidate for the Master Gardener Volunteer Program is not based on prior training, education, knowledge or experience. All candidates will be considered regardless of race, gender, age, or national origin. You must reside in Columbia County to be a volunteer in this county.

A sincere desire to help others, a desire to learn and a personal commitment to volunteer service are the major selection criteria involved. Basic computer skills are also required. Gardening experience and knowledge are always helpful, but they are by no means a requirement for selection for the Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

## 2020 Master Gardener Volunteer Training

The Master Gardener Volunteer Program training is demanding and intensive. The training includes educational lectures (live and recorded), hands-on group activities, demonstrations, outdoor activities and weekly quizzes. The training will be held at the Columbia County Extension Office on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 am to 2:30 pm with time for breaks and lunch from July 14th to August 27th. A schedule will be provided at the time of acceptance to the program.

A **\$120.00** fee is required once you are accepted into the training program. This fee includes a student manual, field guides and all training supplies.

Master Gardener trainees can miss only one (1) day of classes due to the quantity of information covered in each session and may be required to make up topics in order to pass the course.

Each trainee is provided with a Master Gardener Student Manual from the University of Florida containing the most current recommendations approved by the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida. Other materials and supplies are also included in the course.

At the conclusion of the training, all trainees are required to take a comprehensive, open book examination on the subjects covered and receive a ***passing grade of 70%***. Only then can the candidate be awarded the title of Master Gardener Volunteer.

In exchange for the knowledge and training received, all new Master Gardener Volunteers are asked to volunteer **75 hours** during their first year and volunteers must abide by a set of policies set out by IFAS and the Columbia County Extension Office.

## Columbia County Master Gardener Volunteer Activities

As the Master Gardener Volunteers assist the Extension Office, they are in effect "extending the Extension Service." As such, they provide advice and recommendations that have been well documented as a result of evidence-based research and are supported by the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida.

Master Gardener Volunteers deal only with homeowner questions. Extension Agents must respond to all commercial or professional grower or landscaper questions or problems.

All Master Gardener Volunteer activities must provide help to Columbia County Extension and therefore, must be pre-approved by the Horticulture Agent.

Previously trained, certified Master Gardener Volunteers provide their (35) hours of volunteer time in many ways including working in the office answering gardening questions, writing newsletter columns and fact sheets, making home problem-solving visits, working with youth in the 4-H program, creating educational exhibits, speaking to local organizations, and staffing information booths at community events.

New Master Gardener Volunteers are required to spend at least 25 hours working in the office for continued on-the-job training and mentoring. Activities will include answering gardening questions and working on educational projects. Office volunteer work requires basic computer skills and will help volunteers become comfortable in their new role as educators. New volunteers are also required to spend at least 10 hours in the demonstration gardens at the office. The remaining required volunteer hours may be spent on various out-of-office activities such as plant information clinics, speaking to local groups, working with school gardens, and staffing the Extension booth at the Columbia County Fair.

Learning is on-going for Master Gardener Volunteers. Regular training sessions give Master Gardeners the opportunity to gain additional timely gardening information. Training is often coupled with the monthly Master Gardener meetings, which include field trips led by the Horticulture Agent to various functions around the state. In past years, we attended the UF Floriculture Trials, UF Poinsettia Field Day, visited wholesale and retail nurseries in north Florida, manned the Master Gardener booth at EPCOT Theme Park's International Flower & Garden Festival, and toured specialty farms such as the Greathouse Butterfly Farm. Additionally, UF/IFAS offers advanced Master Gardener trainings. These voluntary sessions provide in-depth information on gardening subjects and are presented by State Extension specialists and other authorities. It is an excellent opportunity for Master Gardeners to sneak a look into the future of horticultural research at IFAS.

## **COLUMBIA COUNTY MASTER GARDENER POLICIES**

The title "Florida Master Gardener Volunteer" is to be used only and exclusively in the Florida Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Volunteer Program in which the trained and certified Master Gardeners answer gardening questions. Thus, ***Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to identify themselves only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work in this program.***

In addition to the University training, Master Gardener Volunteers have diagnostic support via County Extension Agents and State Extension Specialists. Master Gardener Volunteers also are provided Cooperative Extension Service publications, which discuss University recommendations.

***Florida Master Gardeners are advised not to advertise their names or their places of business, nor be listed on the advertisements of business places as Master Gardener Volunteers.*** This is a University of Florida-Florida Cooperative Extension Service public service program providing unbiased information.

Appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University or Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business is improper. In making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals (e.g., insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides), Florida Master Gardener Volunteers are to follow published UF/IFAS Florida Cooperative Extension Service recommendations.

Use of other pesticide recommendations is not approved. Cultural problems, which are not specifically covered by Cooperative Extension Service recommendations, may be handled by suggesting treatments, which an experienced Master Gardener Volunteer considers appropriate. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest control on such crops or professional landscapes are to be referred to the local County Extension Agent.

A Florida Master Gardener Volunteer must attend the prescribed hours of instruction and pass an examination administered by the Florida Cooperative Extension Service before becoming a certified Master Gardener Volunteer. ***This certification is restrictive in nature in that it is valid only when the individual is participating in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program and for one year only. If an individual ceases active participation, then the certification as Master Gardener Volunteer becomes void.*** New certifications will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the program for the coming year. Those not continuing in the program will not be recertified and should be aware that if they represent themselves as Master Gardener Volunteers, they are violating their original commitment to the Florida Cooperative Extension Service.

The training and experience gained by participation in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer program is valuable and may rightfully be listed and featured as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed, and while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Master Gardener Volunteers should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Master Gardener Volunteer at the place of business.

Experienced Master Gardener Volunteers are likely to receive invitations to speak before groups. **Please do not seek payment for such speaking appearances.** Your work is much appreciated by the Florida Cooperative Extension Service and Columbia County gardeners who have received or will receive your counsel.

## **COLUMBIA COUNTY PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

**RECERTIFICATION as an Active Master Gardener Volunteer** - a Master Gardener Volunteer may recertify for participation in the program for another year by:

- (1) Committing to thirty five (35) hours of volunteer work to be completed in one year, AND
- (2) By completing or having completed ten (10) hours of additional horticulture training. Examples of this are: Master Gardener training classes for new trainees, Master Gardener advanced training sessions, horticulture classes held at the extension office, horticulture seminars, educational field trips, etc. Check with the Horticulture Agent to see if the training is acceptable.

**INACTIVE STATUS** - an *inactive* Master Gardener is one who is unable to commit to an additional thirty five (35) hours at present but would like the opportunity to possibly recertify him/herself in the future. The following policies apply:

- (1) An inactive Master Gardener Volunteer is one who is in good standing, having completed his/her original commitment of seventy five (75) hours volunteer service the first year and can recertify at any time.
- (2) Inactive Master Gardener Volunteers are *not* eligible for Master Gardener Advanced Training, monthly mailings, or Master Gardener educational meetings.
- (3) For inactive Master Gardener Volunteers to become reinstated, they must complete ten (10) hours of horticulture training and receive a ***passing grade of 70%*** on a comprehensive examination on the materials covered in basic Master Gardener training.

### **Pre-Approval**

Master Gardener Volunteers will be required to have all projects pre-approved. The Horticulture Agent will decide which projects are assigned to which volunteer and will provide approval.

### **Required Attendance at Monthly Meetings**

Master Gardener Volunteers will be required to attend at least 4 monthly meetings per year. Volunteer hours will not be given for attendance at monthly meetings. However, learning hours may be available if there is an educational portion during the meeting. Meetings are currently scheduled for the third Thursday of the month at 9:00 am.

### **Reporting of Hours**

Master Gardener Volunteers are required to report hours monthly using an online Volunteer Management System (VMS). VMS training will be provided at the appropriate time. This online system requires all volunteers to have an active email address, although a computer at the Extension Office may be used to report hours. New Master Gardener Volunteers will have exactly one year from graduation to complete their 75 volunteer hours. Recertified Master Gardener Volunteers must complete their volunteer hours by Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

### **Requirements of Columbia County Master Gardener Volunteers**

- ✓ Must be outgoing and work well with the public and other volunteers
- ✓ Have a desire to learn and help others
- ✓ Must follow directions and be flexible (we often get requests on short notice)
- ✓ Must have time to volunteer; often those working full time are unable to complete the required hours.
- ✓ Must have a computer and email: this is the only way to disseminate information between meetings in a timely manner and report volunteer hours.
- ✓ Each year, all Master Gardener Volunteers are required to work on a project (whether an ongoing project or a new project), and are also required to conduct an educational program or demonstration, or work in the office answering homeowner questions.
- ✓ New Master Gardener volunteers are asked to work a minimum of 25 hours in the office answering homeowner questions and working on educational projects and 10 hours in the demonstration gardens.
- ✓ Since Master Gardeners work with youth, yearly background checks are necessary.





# 2020 Master Gardener Volunteer Application

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY

NAME: Mr. Mrs. Ms. \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address City ZIP

PHONE: home \_\_\_\_\_ work \_\_\_\_\_ cell \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

- What County do you currently live in? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are you currently employed? YES NO Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
- Education: High School College Degree & Major Other advanced training/degree  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Have you applied for Master Gardener training before? YES NO  
If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- Please list any training, practical experience, special interests and/ or hobbies you have had in gardening, horticulture, farming, or related fields:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Please list any specialized skills you have that can be used in the Master Gardener program e.g., publicity, carpentry, grant research or writing, irrigation systems, etc.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What gardening affiliations do you have (garden clubs, horticultural societies, etc.)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are you currently volunteering for other groups or organizations? YES NO  
\_\_\_\_\_

○ How did you learn of the Florida Master Gardener Program?

\_\_\_\_\_

○ Why do you want to become a Florida Master Gardener?

\_\_\_\_\_

○ Do you own a personal computer      YES    NO

○ How often do you check email:              daily    weekly    several times daily    rarely

○ List *all* time periods that you can do volunteer work (e.g. Mondays, Tuesdays, every Friday afternoon, etc.).

○ What are the *best* days for you to do volunteer work (e.g. every Friday afternoon, first and third Tuesday of each month, etc.)

○ Do you have any physical restrictions that prevent you from working outside in the gardens or greenhouse? (This question is for information purposes and answering yes to this question does not affect acceptance into the program.)

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to become a Florida Master Gardener and would like to be accepted into the training program beginning in August, 2019. If I am accepted and successfully complete the course of instruction, I agree to donate at least 75 hours of public service in the next 12 months through the Florida Master Gardener Program. I have also read, understand, and agree to abide by the Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Project Requests**

### **What Do You Want to Work on as You Volunteer this Year?**

**Please request the projects that you feel qualified for and/or interested in. Volunteer training and mentoring is offered for each project.**

- Work in Extension office answering homeowner questions. This would involve working a 3 to 4-hour shift on a specific day(s) when you are available. (Required for new volunteers)
- Write articles and gardening tips for the horticultural newsletter and/or Facebook page (1/2 page or less).
- Teach youth to garden during youth gardening programs held at area schools.
- Work in greenhouse or shade house performing grower tasks such as potting plants, watering, pruning, deadheading, etc.
- Design landscape plans for new *demonstration gardens* at the Extension office.
- Staff community plant clinics held in retail garden centers or other locations. Homeowners will ask you their gardening questions and you will have educational information to distribute to them.
- Conduct online research and gather information for publications, county fact sheets, and class presentations (to be completed by the Horticulture Agent).
- Assist with 4-H clubs and summer day camps. Plan gardening activities, crafts, and games. Work to execute program and/or act as a guest speaker using related curriculum.
- Create educational posters and displays that can be used for teaching during community events.
- Give gardening presentations (on a topic you are comfortable with) to various groups such as garden clubs, churches, neighborhood associations, the VA, or civic groups. These groups sometimes request speakers on a variety of topics.
- Plant, maintain and create signage for demonstration gardens at the Extension Office.
- Provide on-going teaching and horticulture knowledge to organizations like the VA and CARC.
- Create new projects: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners**

Within the state of Florida, 56 counties currently maintain active Master Gardener Volunteer programs. This being the case, a need exists for the establishment of standards for all Florida Master Gardener Volunteers to represent their county in a manner consistent with exemplary citizenship and leadership.

To become a certified Florida Master Gardener Volunteer, one is required to attend the prescribed hours of instruction and pass an examination administered by the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service. This certification is restrictive in nature and is valid only for one year and when the individual is participating in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program. New certifications will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the coming year.

As a certified Florida Master Gardener Volunteer, you will be eligible to attend educational programs such as the Florida Master Gardener Continued Training Conference offered by the University of Florida, as well as local educational programs and field trips provided by the county agent. Master Gardener Volunteers are also provided with the most recent information available on environmental horticulture issues and related topics by the County Master Gardener Coordinator and State Extension Specialists.

Master Gardener Volunteers are encouraged to participate in all components of the planned program (including record keeping), be responsive to the reasonable requests of the county agent in charge, and be respectful of the need for personal safety and the safety of others. Whenever injuries do occur, they should be reported to the County Master Gardener Coordinator immediately. Along with active participation, Master Gardeners are expected to uphold a professional demeanor. The University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service functions without regard to race, sex, or national origin and does not tolerate:

- ❖ Possession of alcohol or drugs in the workplace;
- ❖ Abuse or theft of public or personal property;
- ❖ Sexual harassment or misconduct;
- ❖ Verbal abuse or failure to cooperate with other Master Gardener Volunteers, staff members, and/or the public;
- ❖ Possession or use of weapons or fireworks in the workplace;
- ❖ Defamation of the organization;
- ❖ Creating an implied or outright University or Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business;
- ❖ Misrepresentation of sources of information;
- ❖ Consistently giving out incorrect information;
- ❖ Use of state and/or county equipment without authorization.

Master Gardener Certification may become void when an individual ceases active participation in the program or dismissal may result from violations described above.

Illegal activities will be referred to law enforcement. Those individuals not continuing in the program should be aware if they represent themselves as Florida Master Gardeners, they are violating their original commitment to the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service.

The training and experience gained by participation in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer program are valuable and may rightly be listed and featured as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed, and while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Master Gardeners shall not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Florida Master Gardener at the place of business.

Experienced Florida Master Gardener Volunteers may be invited to speak before various community groups. Please do not seek payment for such speaking appearances. Gratuitous personal payments (i.e., in the form of cash or gifts) for such presentations are not encouraged.

The title "Florida Master Gardener Volunteer" is to be used only and exclusively in the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Volunteer Program in which trained and certified Florida Master Gardener Volunteers answer gardening questions. Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to use the title only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work on the behalf of the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service. Florida Master Gardener Volunteers shall not use the Florida Master Gardener title in any advertisements or activities not related to University of Florida/IFAS Master Gardener activities. The Florida Master Gardener Volunteer program represents a University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service public education program and one should avoid having association with commercial products or implying University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service endorsements of any product or place of business.

In making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals (i.e., insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides), Florida Master Gardener Volunteers **MUST FOLLOW PUBLISHED** University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension recommendations. Cultural problems that are not specially covered by University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service recommendations may be handled by suggesting treatments, which an experienced Master Gardener considers appropriate. If you are making a recommendation based on personal experience, state clearly that you are speaking for yourself and not the Extension Service. Questions concerning any commercial horticultural enterprise (i.e., vegetable production, fruit crops production, landscape maintenance of golf course, recreational park, school grounds or commercial nursery production) are to be referred to the local Horticulture Extension Agent.

**Special Note:**

Individuals who are not acting on behalf of the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service are strongly urged to make every effort to minimize the appearance of being on duty before making any recommendations in the area of horticulture. Speaking "off the record" is your right; however, make sure everyone knows you are speaking for yourself and not the Extension Service.

.....

I have read the above policies regarding my services as a Florida Master Gardener volunteer and do here by agree to give at least 75 hours of service in my first year and at least 35 hours in each subsequent year to the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program in return for the training provided by the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service.

I have also read the state guidelines regarding active/inactive status of Master Gardeners and understand the recertification policy.

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Agent

Date

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Signature of Applicant

Date

# Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Screening Application

Citizens interested in volunteering for the UF/IFAS Extension Florida Master Gardener Volunteer program must complete this application. Acceptance is contingent on return of this form to your county Extension office for submission and clearance through appropriate screening processes. These processes are in place to help ensure the safety and well-being of all Extension program participants.

**General Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Male  Female

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived at this address? \_\_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_\_ Months

(If less than 5 years, attach a sheet listing all previous addresses for the past 5 years.)

Day phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

List **work** experience during the past 5 years, with most recent experiences first. Add pages if needed.

Employer	Position/Title	City/State	Years

List **volunteer** experience during the past 5 years, with current or most recent experiences first. Identify work with youth and community groups. Add a page, if needed.



Organization/Group	Role/Title	City/State	Years

**Personal Interest**

Why are you interested in volunteering?

**References**

List three (3) references who have knowledge of your qualifications but who are not related to you.

Name	Mailing Address	Phone

Have you ever pled no contest or guilty to a criminal offense or have you been convicted and/or had adjudication withheld for a criminal offense within the past seven (7) years?                      Yes                       No

If yes, explain:

Have you ever pled no contest or guilty to a criminal offense or have you been convicted and/or had adjudication withheld for a criminal offense involving a minor (including a deferred imposition of sentence)?      Yes       No   
If yes, explain:

*Note: A criminal record will not necessarily disqualify an applicant. A criminal record will be considered as it relates to specific responsibilities of the volunteer role.*

**I certify that the above information is correct. I authorize the University of Florida IFAS Extension Service to request information for conducting a background check and to contact references. I authorize a check of my driver's license record as needed. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of the facts requested is just cause for non-appointment as an Extension program volunteer. My signature and information below are necessary to process this application.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Driver's License Number (State)

Thank you for your application. Return the application to the county Extension office at your earliest convenience.

UF/IFAS Extension  
Background Screening Form

Volunteers who want to work with youth or in some cases all volunteers of a county University of Florida IFAS Extension Master Gardener Volunteer program must complete this background screening form. Acceptance as a volunteer or the ability to work with youth on a regular basis is contingent on the return of this form to the County Extension Office for submission and clearance through the appropriate screening process. These processes are in place to help ensure the safety and well-being of all Extension program participants.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Driver's License #: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_